

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BONN 07370 01 OF 02 071621Z

45

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 IO-10 ACDA-05 SAI-01 OMB-01

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O R 071517Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9910

INFO USMISSION USBERLIN

AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 07370

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PINR, GW

SUBJECT: RAINER BARZEL'S COMEBACK

REF: BONN A-545 OF OCTOBER 29, 1974

SUMMARY: BARZEL PERFORMED ACTIVELY AND WELL IN THE NORTH-RHINE WESTPHALIA (NRW) ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND IS WELL ON THE WAY TO REFURBISHING HIS IMAGE AND REBUILDING HIS POLITICAL BASE IN NRW AND IN THE CDU NATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY GROUP. HE IS NOT IN A POSITION TO MAKE A BID FOR THE CDU LEADERSHIP BEFORE 1976, BUT HE IS A POSSIBLE CANDIDATE FOR A CABINET POST IF THE 1976 ELECTIONS PRODUCE A CDU GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY

1. ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING SIDELIGHTS OF THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 BONN 07370 01 OF 02 071621Z

ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN NRW HAS BEEN THE GRADUAL BUT

STEADY RE-EMERGENCE OF FORMER CDU PARTY CHAIRMAN AND PARLIAMENTARY GROUP LEADER RAINER BARZEL. THE CDU'S 1972 CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE HAS CLEARLY MOVED WELL ALONG THE ROAD TO A POLITICAL COMEBACK. THE QUESTION IS HOW FAST CAN HE MOVE AND WHERE CAN HE GO?

2. BARZEL'S INITIAL TACTIC OF LYING LOW AND FAITHFULLY SUPPORTING PARTY ACTIVITIES MOVED INTO SECOND GEAR EARLIER THIS YEAR WHEN HE VENTURED INTO THE ELEBAVARIA, RHEINLAND-PFALZ AND SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN. HE ATTAINED REAL MOMENTUM AND CONSIDERABLE FAVORABLE PRESS COMMENTARY AS HE MOVED INTO THE IMPORTANT AND WIDELY PUBLICIZED ELECTORAL CONTEST IN HIS HOME TERRITORY OF NRW.

3. IN OVER FIFTY CAMPAIGN APPEARANCES, MOSTLY TO MEDIUM-SIZED BUT CAPACITY AUDIENCES, BARZEL SUCCEEDED IN BRINGING HIS NAME AND HIS PERSONALITY BACK INTO THE POLITICAL FOREGROUND AND IN FASHIONING SOME FAVORABLE ALTERATIONS IN HIS PUBLIC IMAGE. HE CUTS A GOOD PHYSICAL FIGURE -- HE IS TRIM (HE DIETED AWAY 30 LBS SOON AFTER HIS RESIGNATION FROM THE TOP PARTY LEADERSHIP POSTS IN 1973), PHYSICALLY FIT AND LOOKS DISTINGUISHED. HE HAS ALSO STREAMLINED HIS ORATORICAL STYLE AND CONVEYS THE IMPRESSION OF A MAN IN VERY GOOD COMMAND OF THE SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES.

4. IN CAMPAIGN RALLIES, BARZEL HAS STRUCK A NOTE OF MODESTY. HE BEGINS BY HUMBLY THANKING THE AUDIENCE FOR APPLAUSE "WHICH SHOWS THAT PAST WORK AND PERFORMANCES HAVE NOT BEEN FORGOTTEN". "I CAMPAIGN", HE SAYS, "BECAUSE I CARE -- NOT BECAUSE I HAVE AMBITIONS", AND "I CAN TELL THE TRUTH, AS I DO NOT NEED TO BE POPULAR." HE HAS ALSO MASTERED THE ART OF LAUGHING AT ONESELF -- "LOOK AT ME, ONE CAN LIVE WITHOUT HOLDING OFFICE*"

5. ALTHOUGH THE DOMINANT IMAGE WHICH BARZEL HAS ESTABLISHED FOR HIMSELF IS ONE OF THE HARDWORKING, SINCERE, "SACHLICH" AND "BESCHEIDEN" POLITICIAN DEDICATED TO TENDING THE GRASS ROOTS, HE HAS NOT CLOSED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 BONN 07370 01 OF 02 071621Z

THE DOOR ON SPECULATION ABOUT HIS POSSIBLE RETURN TO A POSITION OF HIGHER POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY. WHEN ASKED IN PUBLIC GATHERINGS ABOUT HIS POLITICAL FUTURE, HE INVARIABLY RECOUNTS THE STORY OF THE SPRINTER WHO, ON THE VERGE OF VICTORY, IS STRUCK IN THE KNEE BY THREE SHOTS FROM BEHIND. (THE THREE SHOTS PRESUMABLY SYMBOLIZING THE DEFECTIONS IN THE APRIL 1972 VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE, STRAUSS' STRATEGY OF ABSTENTION ON THE

EASTERN TREATIES, AND THE 1973 VOTE OF THE CDU/CSU
FRAKTION OPPOSING FRG ENTRY TO THE UN.) BARZEL REMARKS
THAT "IT WILL TAKE SOME TIME FOR HIS KNEE TO HEAL."

6. BARZEL IS CERTAINLY NOT ABOUT TO MAKE A RETURN BID
FOR THE PARTY LEADERSHIP AT THIS POINT AND PROBABLY
CANNOT MAKE A COMEBACK TO HIS FORMER TOP POSITIONS IN
THE PARTY AS LONG AS STRAUSS HAS A SAY IN SUCH MATTERS.
BARZEL IS STILL AN OUTSIDER ON THE NATIONAL POLITICAL
SCENE -- HIGHLY RESPECTED BUT NOT IN A POSITION OF

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PAGE 01 BONN 07370 02 OF 02 071627Z

45
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 07370

GREAT POWER. HOWEVER, HE HAS REGAINED CONSIDERABLE
POLITICAL STATURE AND IS AGAIN "IN" IN NRW, WHERE MANY

DO NOT HESITATE TO SAY THAT HE WOULD HAVE BEEN A
BETTER NO. 1 CDU CANDIDATE THAN KOEPPLER. CDU BUNDESTAG
DEPUTIES ARE ALSO COMMENTING TO US PRIVATELY, AND WITH
INCREASING FREQUENCY, THAT BARZEL WOULD MAKE A MUCH
BETTER PARLIAMENTARY GROUP LEADER THAN CARSTENS. CDU
CHAIRMAN HELMUT KOHL, HAVING NOW COME OUT AHEAD AFTER
MANY YEARS OF COMPETITION WITH BARZEL FOR THE PARTY
LEADERSHIP, CANNOT HELP BUT BE UNEASY AT THE PROSPECT
OF BARZEL DEVELOPING A RIVAL POWER BASE IN NRW AND/OR
IN THE BUNDESTAG/FRAKTION. WE HAVE HEARD THAT KOHL
IS THEREFORE CONSIDERING HOW HE CAN BEST "NEUTRALIZE
BARZEL" AND IS CONTEMPLATING PROMISING BARZEL A CABINET
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PAGE 02 BONN 07370 02 OF 02 071627Z

POST IN A POST-1976 KOHL GOVERNMENT (PRESUMABLY ON THE
UNDERSTANDING THAT BARZEL WOULD AGREE TO STAY AWAY FROM
THE TOP CDU POSITIONS IN NRW AND IN THE FRAKTION).
WHICH MINISTRY THAT MIGHT BE IS A PROBLEM, HOWEVER,
SINCE THERE ARE A NUMBER OF OTHERS SUCH AS STRAUSS,
BIEDENKOPF AND KATZER IN LINE FOR THE TOP DOMESTIC
AND FOREIGN POLICY SLOTS. WHERE THIS WILL ALL COME
OUT IS HARD TO SAY BUT IN ANY EVENT BARZEL HAS QUIETLY
BUT RATHER RAPIDLY MADE HIMSELF A MAN TO BE BARGAINED
WITH AND IS ONCE AGAIN A FACTOR IN THE FRG DOMESTIC
POLITICAL EQUATION.
HILLENBRAND

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